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Critical Evaluation

Rhet Dragons Student Writing Samples

2023

Study of My Writing (2023-2024)

Samantha Stofko

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“Study of My Writing” Samantha Stofko (critical evaluation example)

Questions to Consider For Discussion and Reflection

A critical evaluation can take many forms including a document discussing the author’s process, a cover letter, a reflective essay, or in this case an empirical study. In this critical evaluation, Stofko begins with an introduction to previous research in writing on the topic of revision. Next, she presents a methods section with choices about how she sampled her own writing and how to collect data from that writing sample. Her next section includes various data visualizations and interpretation. Finally, Stofko concludes with a discussion section providing some overall points, suggestions for future research, and goals and priorities for teaching revision someday with her own students. As you read Stofko’s study, consider the following:

- Stofko sets up her critical evaluation in an IMRAD structure (Intro, Methods, Results/Analysis, and Discussion.) How was this structure familiar or surprising to you? What does this structure allow Stofko to do or not to do in critically evaluating her own writing?
- The Results/Analysis section makes use of various data visualizations, mostly in the form of bar graphs. How does this choice change the way you read the study? What advantages are there for her in using these graphs to present her data comparisons?
- What was the most effective or useful section of this study for you as the reader? What section do you think was most beneficial to Stofko in understanding her own writing? Why do you think so?

Study of My Writing by Samantha Stofko

Introduction

In the past couple of hundreds of years, people have been studying writing and critiquing their own developing work. One writing theory that has been prominent in people’s minds is the logic of revision. People tend to believe that the meaning of revision is discovered as the writer makes an abundance of small unique decisions in their work with the course of consideration and reconsideration through focus, form, and voice. In this project, I am focusing on the process of receiving feedback and making revisions between my draft and the final. One article that has discussed the complexity of revision and what it means to consider the audience and structure of your essay is Murray’s article called “Making Meaning Clear: The Logic of Revision.” In this article, he notes “each editorial act must relate to the meaning. That is the primary consideration that rules each editorial decision. Considerations of the audience, structure, tone, pace, usage, mechanics, and typography are primarily decided on one issue: do they make the meaning clear?” (Murray 33). Additionally, revision is the principle so that not only the writer can comprehend but the reader too. Focus, form, and voice are all three parts of rereading what you have written. Focus is the beginning step of revision. First, the writer will “see their work from a distance the reader would and make connections with the meaning of the writing in mind” (Murray 36). Following is form, this is when the writer will read it again but visualize “the text

as a sequence of chunks of writing, like chunks of meaning. You are no longer looking at the text as a whole, but more aligned with the concern of details” (Murray 37). Finally, voice, which is where the writer will “generally work from the larger issue of voice down to the paragraphs to sentences to phrases to single words” (Murray 38). This is an important aspect of writing because it helps the reader not only express their emotions and feelings through voice in their writing but focus and form allowing the writer to connect to their reader’s interests.

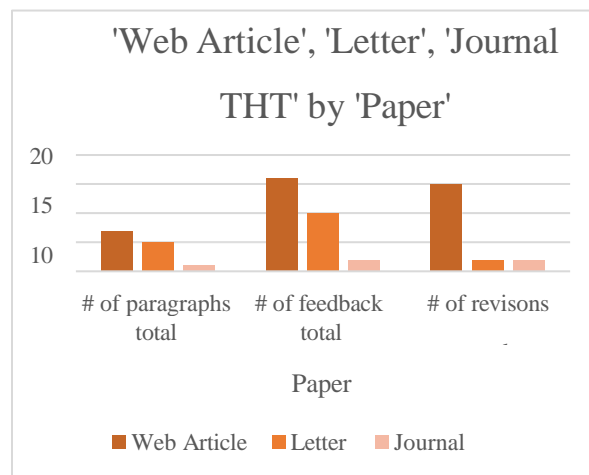
Methods

For my own writing, I am interested in counting the number of times I revised my paragraphs in contrast with the feedback I received because this will improve my knowledge of how my writing process transformed from beginning to end. In order to study the writing process and the use of feedback, samples of my writing were determined. My work throughout the semester was composed of writing different prompts. Specifically, I selected 3 pieces of my writing: Project 1, a web article, Project 2, an intervention letter, and a journal response from my Theatre Arts class. Then, I checked each paragraph while counting the number of feedback I received between both my drafts and finals. The reason why I chose this type of composition was to investigate the differences in my revision process, and changes made from feedback to support my claims within all three of my papers.

Results and Analysis

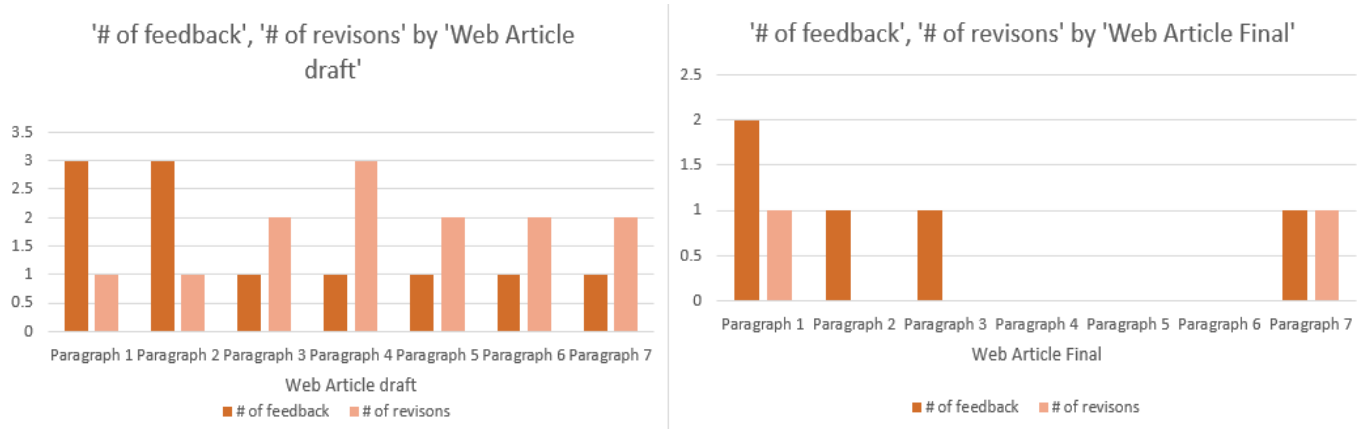
The results from my data collection were as follows:

Paper	# Of Paragraphs Total	# Of Feedback Total	# Of Revisions Total
Web Article	7	16	15
Letter	5	10	2
Theater Journal	1	2	2

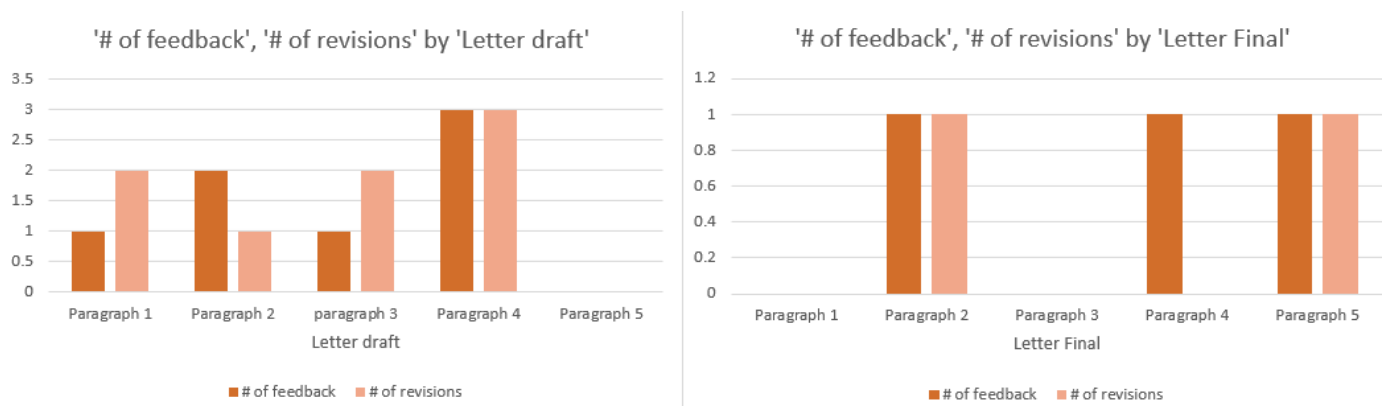


This graph visualizes the data in the table above. This shows the total number of feedback and revisions I made between all three papers. This data shows I had the most amount of feedback and revisions in my first project, the web article. This explains quite a bit because it was the first time I wrote as a college student, hence the reason why the web article shows a proximate amount of comments and revisions. My intervention letter has more feedback than revisions,

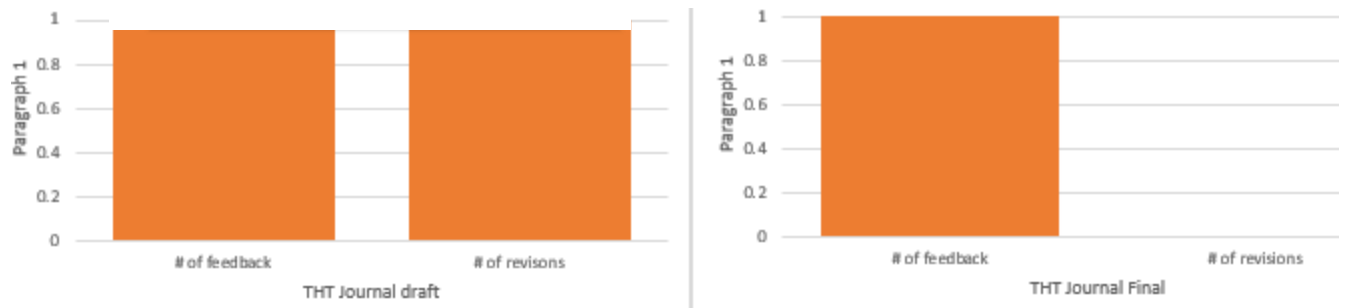
followed by my journal entry which doesn't have much feedback and revisions because we entered the middle of the semester. I finally understood what was being asked of me and I was able to adjust to that.



What these data tables show is the different possible trends between my Web Article draft and the final. In my draft, we can see there is a high number of comments and revisions that were made compared to the final of this paper. This is because, in the beginning, there was some difficulty setting up the correct sequence of organization of the subtopics. Also, since it was the first project, it was challenging to begin writing something about certain criteria with which I was not familiar. We can see a peak of revision in paragraph four because this was where I needed to be more subtle when explaining the effects of COVID on children. I had to redirect my focus into questioning if this piece of my writing makes sense to the reader. I assume I took the time to rewrite sentences that makes the meaning of my subtopic clearer. In the final process of my web article, we see fewer amounts of feedback and revisions in paragraphs four through six which indicates that I fixed that inaccuracy, while also checking to make sure my point was directly supported by convincing evidence. There were still some specs of feedback on paragraph one, but that was my professor telling me that I did well reorganizing my information previously. From the draft to the final, there is a clear distinction that my writing has not only become better through the process of revision but receiving helpful feedback.



This data table shows the trends of my intervention letter draft versus the final. In the draft, we noticed that there is more feedback and revision in the beginning parts of the letter. In paragraph four, I noticed that there were more comments about the statistical information I laid out before getting into my intervention. Most of the feedback explained that I needed to decrease the number of statistics that surrounded the topic of binge drinking in the United States and add more depth to the reasons why people were doing this. This paragraph was revised more often due to the circumstances of rearranging my citations and adding/refraining from set details. There is no revision and feedback on the final paragraph because it was the conclusion, and this restates my topic from the beginning of my letter, which I did well on. In the final, we see one comment and revision based on small increment changes from some of the word usage that I decided to make my letter more sophisticated. My feedback just stated that my conclusion was satisfactory. Paragraphs one and three had no comments or revision which concludes that there was no need to change sentences and make corrections.



This data collection describes my work for a journal entry I did for my Theatre Arts class. This journal entry talked about the history of Native American theatre and what each dance symbolizes. I didn't have much to do other than put some historical background and explain why this interested me. I did have a comment about using more cited information which ended up being my only revision for this journal entry. I added more citations about the Native American Boarding school and how this forced their theatre to "shut down" due to colonization. This helped not only to add more specific information, but it helped connect thousands of years of Native American culture. My only comment in my final was about how well I incorporated pieces from various times of history.

Discussion for the Future

Although this study portrays a small sample of three writing pieces, I do believe that revision and feedback have helped me overall understand the tone, structure, and how the audience absorbs my information. From the beginning of the semester to now, I can certainly see a difference in how my writing has progressed to a more beneficial style and technique that will better help me in my future endeavors. Most of my revisions were combined with redirecting sentences, reorganizing my paragraphs, and cleaning up imperfections in my draft that'll make my final paper stronger. This made my writing process easier and helped my topic become clearer to the reader. In CPN 100, I have learned more about the different writing processes such as revision, audience analysis, and writing theories to help enhance my writing. In the future, including CPN

101, I will apply what I have learned from my feedback and revisions to incorporate these processes in other essays and papers. Also, when I become a teacher myself, I will have a unit where I will teach my students about the importance of revision and have them revise one of their own small papers they wrote. Not only will this help them understand the process of writing, but it will also help them become more proficient when they are asked to write. If I were to continue to study my own writing, I would want to compare the use of written feedback for revision over time. It might be interesting to think about how to discover the meaning from focus to form to voice and back as I progress through college.

Works Cited

Murray, Donald M. "Making meaning clear: The logic of revision." *Journal of Basic Writing* 3.3 (1981): 33-40.